

Roberto Clemente: American Legend

The first Latin-American baseball superstar was a true hero.

Characters

Circle the name of the character you're going to read. *Starred characters are major roles.

*Narrator 1 (N1)	Ephraim, Roberto's young friend	Coach Samples, coach of the Brooklyn Dodgers
*Narrator 2 (N2)	Mamá, Roberto's mother	Murtaugh, manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates
*Narrator 3 (N3)	Papá, Roberto's father	Announcer Smith, a radio announcer
Jaime, Roberto's young friend	Marín, a softball team manager in Puerto Rico	Vera, Roberto's wife

Pronouncing Spanish Words

When there are non-English words in a story, work on pronouncing them before reading the story. That way, you won't stumble over the words while reading. In this play, there are several Spanish words. They are:

Papá (pah-PAH): dad
Mamá (mah-MAH): mom
hola (OH-lah): hello
gracias (GRAH-siahs): thanks
bendición (ben-dee-SION): blessing

If you speak Spanish or take Spanish-language classes, help your classmates practice pronouncing these words! Enjoy the play!

SCENE 1

N1: It is 1945 in the town of Carolina [cah-roh-LEE-na] in Puerto Rico. Most of the men here work long days in the sugarcane fields.

N2: Young Roberto Clemente, 11, plays catch with his friends Ephraim and Jaime. Their ball is old and worn. Their gloves are made from an old sack.

Jaime: Try catching this pitch, Roberto. It's going all the way to the sugarcane fields. You can say hello to your *papá* in the fields.

Roberto: I'd like to see Papá. Throw it a mile, Jaime. I could use the exercise.

N3: Jaime throws. The wind carries the ball far and fast, but Roberto runs even faster.

Readers Theater Play: Roberto Clemente

Jaime: Darn! That was my hardest throw.

N1: Roberto catches the ball perfectly. Then he spins around and throws it back to his friends.

Ephraim: Fantastic!

Jaime: DUCK!

N2: Ephraim and Jaime fall to the ground as the ball hits the tree right between them—a perfect bull’s-eye!

N3: Roberto’s mother comes outside, carrying a lunch pail.

Mamá: Roberto, quit knocking your friends down. They’re nice boys. Now run to the fields and bring your father his food.

Roberto: Mmmm. Smells good, Mamá.

Mamá: It’s your father’s lunch for a hard day’s work. No nibbling, Roberto.

N1: Roberto picks up the lunch pail and runs off to the fields.

SCENE 2

N2: On the road to the fields, Roberto sees a bicycle shop. The bikes are used but in good shape. One is just Roberto’s size. He keeps running.

Roberto: *Hola*, Papá, here’s your lunch.

Papá: *Gracias*, Roberto.

Roberto: Papá, you won’t believe what I saw on the way over here.

Papá: Could it be . . . a bike?

Roberto: How did you know?

Papá: I walked the same road this morning. I saw the bike too.

Roberto: Can I get it?

Papá: Yes.

Roberto: Will you buy it for me, Papá?

Papá: No. But you can earn it.

N3: Roberto gets a job carrying a heavy milk can from a neighbor’s farm to a store half a mile away. At six every morning, he drags the heavy can. After three years, he has enough money to buy the bike.

SCENE 3

N1: As Roberto grows up, his talent for baseball grows too. He becomes known around Puerto Rico.

N2: When Roberto is 14, Roberto Marín sees him play. Marín is the manager of a softball team in Puerto Rico.

N3: Marín invites Roberto to his office one day.

Marín: Glad you could stop by, Roberto. You’re a great

player. I want you on my team.

Roberto: Really?

Marín: I’ve seen you slam homers with a bat made of a tree branch and catch fly balls with a glove made of an old sack. I know you will go far. I’ll help you learn the game, so you’ll do well in the major leagues in America.

Roberto (*smiling*): When do I start?

SCENE 4

N1: Roberto runs home to tell his parents the big news.

Roberto: Mamá, Papá, Mr. Marín has asked me to play on his team!

Papá: That is a great honor, Roberto.

Mamá: We are so proud of you, son. You have our *bendición*.

Roberto: Thank you for the blessing, Mamá.

SCENE 5

N2: In 1954, Roberto travels to America to play baseball.

N3: Several teams are interested in Roberto. The Brooklyn Dodgers sign him up. Soon Roberto is on his way to New York City. There, he gets some bad news.

WORD WORKOUT

nib • bling: taking little bites | **hon • or:** show of respect

Readers Theater Play: Roberto Clemente

Coach Samples: No need to put on your uniform, Clemente. You won't be playing today.

Roberto: Why not, Coach?

Coach Samples: Orders from the manager. We're sending you to our minor-league team in Montreal. You won't be playing much there either.

Roberto: But I'm one of your best rookies!

Coach Samples: Yeah. You're *too* good. The Giants want you. If you go to them, our main **rival** will get even stronger. But they can't get you if you're playing in the minors in Canada.

Roberto: I've worked every day since I was a little kid. Now baseball is my job. I've got to play. Is there any team you'll trade me to?

Coach Samples: I'll trade you to the Pittsburgh Pirates. They're in last place, so they're no **threat** to us.

Roberto: Playing for the worst team is better than not playing in the majors at all.

N1: In 1955, Roberto joins the Pittsburgh Pirates. Pittsburgh is a strange city for him.

N2: There are very few Latino people there, **unlike** in New York. Roberto doesn't speak perfect English, and the people he meets don't make him feel welcome.

N3: Puerto Rican baseball players are new in the big leagues, and there aren't many of them. People of color are often treated very badly.

N1: Other teams' fans yell racist insults. These words hurt Roberto, but he plays on.

SCENE 6

N2: One day, Roberto is called to the office of Pirates Manager Murtaugh.

Murtaugh: You're a popular player, Clemente. I just heard that you're going to be on a baseball card.

Roberto: That's great! I can't wait to tell my family.

Murtaugh: You don't mind if they change your name on the card, do you?

Roberto (*confused*): Change it to what?

Murtaugh: To "Bobby" Clemente. "Roberto" sounds too Puerto Rican. You're in America now.

SCENE 7

N3: For years, Roberto is known as Bobby Clemente on the baseball cards that show his amazing batting average, runs batted in, and home runs.

Announcer Smith: Here with me is Pittsburgh Pirate Bob Clemente, a fan favorite. Say hello to the fans, Bobby.

Roberto: Hello.

Announcer Smith: Bob, 1961 has been a great year for you. A .351 batting average, 89 RBIs, 100 runs scored, and you won the Gold Glove award for playing outfield. Bobby, tell the fans your hopes for the future.

Roberto: Thank you for those kind words, but I always feel like I can **improve** my skills. As for my career, I'd like the ladies and gentlemen of the press to do me a favor.

Announcer Smith: What's that, Bob?

Roberto: Call me "Roberto."

SCENE 8

N1: In 1964, Roberto falls in love with a woman named Vera Zabala. The couple gets married. They make their home in Puerto Rico.

WORD WORKOUT

ri • val: one who tries to beat another in a game or contest | **threat:** something dangerous

un • like: not like | **im • prove:** make better

Readers Theater Play: Roberto Clemente

Roberto spends the off-season playing in the winter leagues.

N2: Soon Roberto and Vera have three sons. Roberto loves playing with his kids. He also spends part of his time helping people in need.

N3: Over the next few years, Roberto grows better and better at playing baseball. In 1966, he earns the Most Valuable Player award for the league. He is the first Puerto Rican player to win this award.

N1: On September 30, 1972, Roberto reaches an amazing goal.

Announcer Smith: The fans are screaming as Clemente approaches the batter's box with 2,999 hits. And there's the pitch! Clemente connects. It's a line drive to left-center field in the gap! Ladies and gentlemen, Roberto Clemente is the 11th major leaguer in history to collect 3,000 hits. And he's the first Latino baseball player to do it!

N2: The fans stand up and cheer. Later, Roberto speaks to a group of reporters.

Roberto: This hit is for the Pittsburgh fans, the

people of Puerto Rico, and especially for Roberto Marín, my very first coach.

SCENE 9

N3: When the season ends, Roberto goes home to Puerto Rico, as usual.

N1: On December 23, 1972, he and Vera learn that an earthquake has hit the Central American country of Nicaragua.

Roberto: The earthquake killed 7,000 people. It has left at least 250,000 homeless.

Vera: I hope our friends are OK. We know so many young people from when you coached those games in Nicaragua.

Roberto: People are dying there. We must collect money, food, medical supplies, and clothing for them.

Vera: But we can't trust the dictator of Nicaragua to deliver the supplies to the needy people.

Roberto: I will go there myself and make sure the supplies get to the right people.

Vera: No! It's too dangerous.

Roberto: I must help.

Remember my parents giving me *la bendición*, the blessing. I have been so blessed in my life. I must try to give *la bendición* to others.

N2: On December 31, 1972, the supplies are ready to be flown to Nicaragua.

N3: The flight is put off several times because of problems with the plane. Roberto decides to go anyway.

SCENE 10

N1: The plane carrying Roberto and four other volunteers crashes into the sea. No one survives. The whole world is sad.

N2: In 1973, Roberto Clemente is added into the Baseball Hall of Fame. He is the first Latino player to be given this honor.

N3: Today you can still find old baseball cards with the name Bob Clemente. You can also find ones with names like Alex Rodriguez, Sammy Sosa, and Nomar Garciaparra. There are many Latino players in the major leagues today. Roberto Clemente helped make their success possible.

—Danton Stone

WORD WORKOUT

ap•proach•es: gets close to **es•pe•cial•ly:** mainly, above all

sup•plies: tools, goods **dic•ta•tor:** an all-powerful ruler of a country